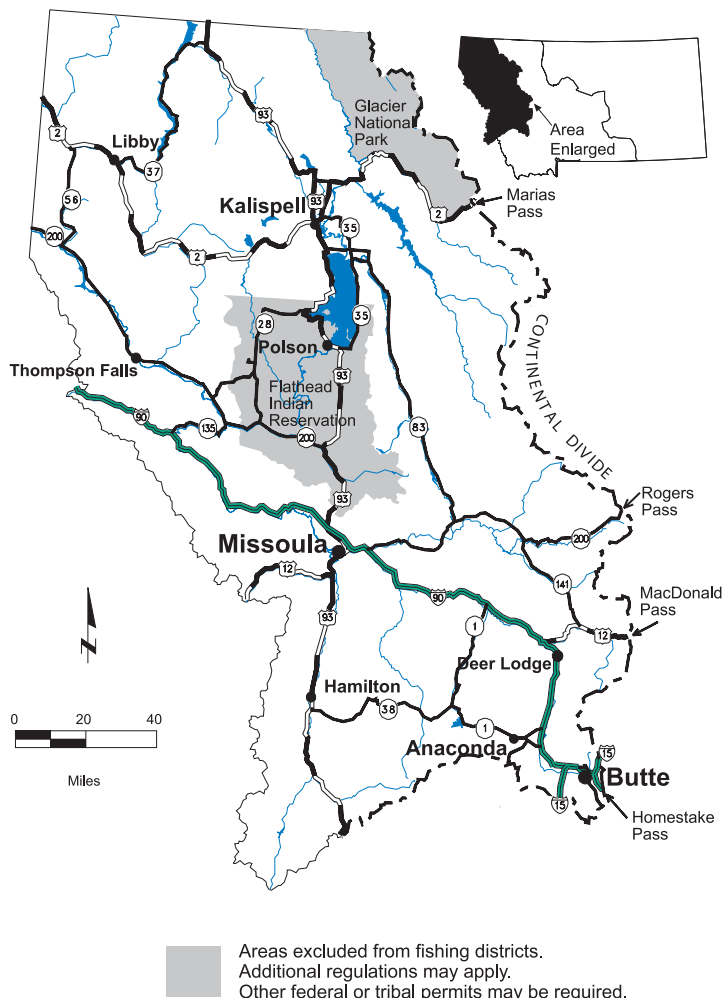


Western Fishing District



The Western Fishing District includes all waters in Montana west of the Continental Divide. For additional information about fishing in this district, please call the following regional headquarters Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.:

Kalispell 406-752-5501
Missoula 406-542-5500
TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) 406-444-1200

WESTERN DISTRICT STANDARD REGULATIONS

Closed Waters

Waters operated as fish hatcheries and rearing ponds by FWP and the US Fish and Wildlife Service shall be closed to fishing at all times. Waters in which FWP operates fish traps and other structures are closed to fishing as posted. Certain water-supply lakes, streams and hazardous areas are also closed as posted.

Dam Closures and Use Restrictions

In the interest of public health and safety, certain areas above and below most dams are closed to the public. These restrictions include areas where no public access is allowed below the ordinary high-water mark. The restricted areas are identified and delineated by signs and/or boat restraining systems.

The following dams are closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, fishing or other recreational activity as marked by boat restraining systems or as posted to restrict access. Other dams not listed here may also be posted for restricted access. For more information call the FWP Fishing Access Coordinator at 406-444-7885, or contact the Army Corp of Engineers 406-293-7751, x255, AVISTA 406-847-2729, Bureau of Reclamation 406-387-5241, DNRC 406-444-2932, Northwest Energy 406-258-6348, or PPL Montana 406-533-3415.

- Big Fork Dam (Lake County), Hungry Horse Dam (Flathead County), Kerr Dam (Lake County), Libby Dam (Lincoln County), Milltown Dam (Missoula County), Noxon Rapids Dam (Sanders County), Thompson Falls Dam (Sanders County)

Beaver Ponds

Beaver ponds on streams are governed by the same regulations that govern the streams.

Irrigation Canals and Ditches

Man-made irrigation canals and ditches are open year round unless stated otherwise in exceptions to standard regulations. The same daily and possession limits apply to them as for rivers/streams.

Reservoirs

Reservoirs are artificially impounded water behind a man-made dam extending upstream to the mouth of its inlet stream(s). Under normal operations, reservoir pool elevation, surface acreage, and the mouths of the inlet stream(s) are expected to vary throughout the year. The inlet stream(s) is often managed under seasons, limits and special regulations that differ from the reservoir regulations. Stream regulations apply to water upstream from the mouth on the reservoir. Streams are defined by a sloped streambed that results in a defined current flow between two discernible stream banks.

Flathead Indian Reservation

A tribal permit is required to fish on waters within the exterior boundary of the Reservation. Call tribal headquarters at 406-675-2700 for information.

Transporting Live Fish

An import permit is required to bring live fish into Montana. It is unlawful to possess or transport live fish away from the body of water in which the fish were taken except for transportation of fish for valid (approved) commercial purposes or as authorized by FWP.

Boat and Motor Restrictions

All passengers under the age of 12 must wear a PFD at all times when the boat is in motion if the boat is less than 26 feet long. A wearable, U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD must be available for each occupant of any boat.

Warm Water Game Fish Stamp

The 1999 Montana Legislature passed a bill to require the purchase of a warm water game fish stamp. The warm water game fish stamp is required to possess warm water fish on the following waters in the Western District:

Blanchard Lake, Flathead County	Loon Lake (Happy's Inn), Lincoln Cnty
Echo Lake, Flathead County	Lower Thompson Lake, Lincoln Cnty
Half Moon Lake, Flathead County	Murphy Lake, Lincoln County
Island Lake (Happy's Inn), Lincoln Cnty	Savage Lake, Lincoln County
Loon Lake (Ferndale), Lake County	Spencer Lake, Flathead County

Methods of Taking Fish

- A valid fishing license is required for all types of fishing.
- Spears and bows are considered lines for purposes of determining line limits.

Hook and Line Limits

Open Water

Rivers and Streams

- 1 line with 2 hooks per line, with or without a pole. The pole or line must be attended and in the angler's immediate control.

Lakes and Reservoirs

- 1 line with 2 hooks per line, with or without a pole (see Flathead Lake exception). The pole or line must be attended and in the angler's immediate control.

Ice Fishing (Lakes and Reservoirs)

Number of Rods/Lines

- 2 rods and/or lines with 2 hooks per line on all lakes and reservoirs open to fishing. When a line is used through the ice, the angler need not be in immediate control but must be in the vicinity and in visual contact with the line.

Size of Hole

- In waters not open to spearing, the maximum size hole that may be used for ice fishing is 144 square inches or 12 inches in diameter.
- There is no size limit for a hole used for fishing with a spear.

Shelters

- Shelter definition/use: Any hut or enclosure constructed of any material, except ice or snow, for the purpose of ice fishing. It is illegal to use any ice fishing shelter not conforming to the following rules:
- Shelter identification: Identification must be painted on or otherwise affixed to all unattended shelters in legible, 2-inch letters plainly visible at a distance of 100 feet. Identification must include the owner's name and address, name and phone number, or 9/10-digit ALS number. Attended shelters at Brown's Lake and Georgetown Lake must also be identified.
- Inspection: Each closed shelter shall have a door that an officer may readily open from the outside for inspection when it is occupied.
- Waste and rubbish disposal: Owners and occupants of shelters are required to keep their shelters (and the area immediately around them) free from rubbish and trash. Anglers must remove waste materials before they leave for the day.
- Shelter removal: Daily removal of shelters is required on:
 - Browns Lake (near Ovando)
 - Echo Lake (near Anaconda)
 - Georgetown Lake
- Shelter removal after the season: The owner of an ice fishing shelter shall remove it from the ice before it becomes irretrievable at the end of the season, or within five days from receipt of notification from FWP to remove the shelter.

Setlines

- Setlines (unattended lines) are not allowed in the Western Fishing District.

Bow and Arrow

- All waters are closed to bow-and-arrow taking of fish, except as noted under special regulations. Crossbows are illegal.

Nets and Traps

- Landing nets may be used for landing hooked fish. See Bait Regulations for use of nets to harvest bait fish.

Snagging

- All waters are closed to snagging of game and nongame fish, except as otherwise noted under District Exceptions.

Spearing

- All waters are closed to spearing of game and nongame fish, except as noted under special regulations. Rubber or spring-propelled spears may be used only by persons swimming or submerged in the water and may be used only for designated species in designated waters. Only hand-propelled spears may be used through the ice.

Bait Regulations

- Game fish, including yellow perch, may not be used as bait except as authorized below under Dead Bait.
- Possession of live fish or use of live fish as bait is prohibited in the Western Fishing District.
- It is illegal to release live bait of any kind into Montana waters; do not empty any live bait containers at your fishing site.
- Nongame fish except sculpins (genus *Cottus*), carp, goldfish and rainbow smelt may be taken for use as dead bait in the following manner:
 - with hook and line; or
 - with seines no larger than 12 feet by 4 feet; or
 - with minnow traps (the dimensions shall not exceed 24 inches x 12 inches x 12 inches); or
 - with cast nets (maximum 6-foot radius) and dip nets (no larger than 3 feet x 3 feet).
- See Commercial Fishing License requirements for information on commercail harvest permits.

Dead Bait

- Nongame fish that are freshly killed or have been preserved by freezing, salting or pickling may be used whole or in pieces as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Sculpins (genus *Cottus*) may not be used as bait, live or dead, in the Western Fishing District.
- Whole game fish may not be used as bait.
- Parts/pieces of bass, burbot (ling), black crappie, northern pike, or yellow perch may be used as bait if edible portions are not wasted.
- The eggs of char, cisco, grayling, salmon or trout may be used as bait. Other parts/ pieces of salmonids may not be used as bait.

Live Bait

- Live bait may not be imported into Montana without authorization from FWP.
- Live animals such as meal worms, red worms, night crawlers, leeches, maggots, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians and insects may be used as bait on all waters not restricted to artificial flies and lures. Leeches may only be imported into Montana from FWP-approved leech dealers and may be acquired from approved bait dealers in Montana. Anglers who import leeches must have in their possession a bill-of-sale from the approved out-of-state leech dealer when fishing with leeches in Montana. A list of approved out-of-state leech dealers may be obtained from FWP by calling 406-452-6181.

Possession and Possession Limits

Possession limit means the number of fish that you may possess at any time in any form: fresh, stored in freezers or lockers, salted, smoked, dried, canned or otherwise preserved. It is illegal to preserve fish (salted, smoked, dried, canned, or otherwise preserved) before taking them to your permanent residence (the physical abode or structure you maintain as your principal, legal residence) unless those fish can be counted. Mobile recreational vehicles, travel trailers, tents or storage/freezer lockers do not qualify as permanent residences. No person may sell or take for the purpose of sale any fish except as authorized in commercial fishing regulations.

Daily limit means the number of fish you may legally take during a calendar day. It is unlawful to exceed the standard daily limit unless the regulations for the water body where you are fishing specify a different limit. "Legally taken" means fish caught and not immediately released alive. Where catch-and-release is allowed, fish released alive are considered not taken. A fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the daily limit of the person originally hooking the fish, even if the fish is donated to another person. If you receive fish from another angler, those fish also become part of your daily limit. You may possess the daily limit allowed only for the body of water on which you are fishing.

Handling and Transporting Legally Taken Fish

While a person is fishing, or while on the water or on the ice:

- All fish in possession must be visibly identifiable to species.
- For a species of fish where size limits apply, all fish in possession must be whole with head, skin, fins and tail attached. Gills and entrails may be removed.
- Fish may be dressed and filleted for immediate consumption.
- Fish may be dressed and filleted for transport to your permanent residence, unless size limits apply, under the following conditions:
 - All fish can be counted and identified. Two fillets will be counted as one fish. If the catch is frozen prior to transport, each fish or fillet must be packaged so it can be counted.
 - Salmonids (trout, salmon, grayling, char and whitefish): the entire skin must be attached to the fillet for identification.
 - Non-salmonids: a minimum of one inch by one inch square shoulder patch of skin with scales must remain attached to each fillet for identification.